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The Role of Clandestine Capabilities in Deterrence: Theory and Practice

Center on Contemporary Conflict

Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School

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The Project on Advanced Systems and Concepts for Countering WMD (PASCC) is run at the Center on Contemporary Studies (CCC) and sponsored by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). PASCC awards and supports strategic studies and dialogues that anticipate and try to reduce the threat of WMD capabilities.



The CCC has a respected track record for providing research and timely analysis on a variety of topics to leading decision makers in the U.S. national security community. Located in the Naval Postgraduate School, the CCC is the research wing of the Department of National Security Affairs.

Research in Progress describes ongoing PASCC research. For more information, please contact pascc@nps.edu.

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The Role of Clandestine Capabilities in Deterrence: Theory and Practice

Performer: Columbia University

Project Lead: Austin Long

Project Cost: \$152,722

FY16–17

Objective:

Clandestine capabilities are an increasingly relevant part of nuclear strength, and will likely be a key determinant of deterrence success and strategic stability in future world politics. While the challenge of managing the balance between political benefit and the need to maintain the secrecy of these capabilities is not new, trends in technology are increasing the salience and importance of this issue across several different military domains. This project will investigate how states might use their clandestine capabilities for political benefit without permitting countermeasures to be implemented that would neutralize those capabilities. The project lead will then develop theoretical frameworks that can be used to analyze the impact of clandestine military capabilities on international politics.

Approach:

This research anticipates developing hypotheses and analytical tools that can guide further scholarly research into the problem of clandestine capabilities. The extant security studies literature on coercion and intelligence lacks a theoretical framework to guide scholarly analysis. This project will fill this critical academic need through the process of theory building. Also, this research will advance the state of scholarly understanding on a number of important issues central to international relations. This research will therefore break new ground in the discipline of security studies, as clandestine capabilities have received little direct attention in the academic literature. Moreover, because of its roots in the bargaining model of war and other literatures on coercion, this research makes connections to several other classic security studies topics and has the potential to shed new light on them. Reports will be made publicly available along with presentation slides and the casebook developed as a supplement to this research.

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